

Holding the Line on Tantrums



Frustration, anger, and an occasional tantrum will happen for all two-year-olds. As a parent you should allow your toddler to express the emotions they feel but, at the same time, try to help direct the anger away from violent or overly aggressive behavior. Here are some suggestions:

- When you see your child starting to get worked up, try to turn the energy and attention to a new activity that is more acceptable.
- If you can't distract your toddler, ignore the behavior. Every time you react to one of these outbursts, you're rewarding the negative behavior with extra attention. Even scolding, punishing, or trying to reason with your child may encourage him/her to act up more.
- If you're in a public place where the behavior is embarrassing you, simply remove your child without discussion or fuss. Wait until he/she is calmed down before you return or continue with your activities.
- If the tantrum involves hitting, biting, or other harmful behavior, you can't ignore it. Don't overreact. Instead, tell your child immediately and clearly that this behavior is not O.K. and remove him/her from the area.
- Don't use physical punishment to discipline your child. If you do, your child may assume that aggression is an acceptable way to respond when he/she doesn't get his way.
- Monitor your child's television viewing. Preschool children may behave more aggressively if they watch violent programs on TV.

Adapted from *Caring for Your Baby and Young Child: Birth to Age 5*; American Academy Pediatrics, 1993.

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